

## Introduction. Researching trust

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## ***Introduction. Researching trust: the ongoing challenge of matching objectives and methods***

**Fergus Lyon, Guido Möllering and Mark N.K. Saunders**

The second edition of this handbook provides an updated and expanded overview of the variety of methods that researchers can apply when they study the multi-faceted phenomenon of trust. This second edition responds to the growing interest in research on trust, recognising that it is one of the most fascinating and fundamental social phenomena yet at the same time one of the most ‘elusive’ (Gambetta, 1988) and challenging concepts one could study. One step forward for the broad community of trust researchers is to inform each other about the plurality of methods available to us, to share the pros and cons of these methods from our practical research experience, and to facilitate research designs according to the maxim of ‘horses for courses’.

However, in practice, matching our methods to our specific research objectives in order to achieve ‘methodological fit’ (Edmondson and McManus, 2007) is easier said than done. Apart from the common inclination to stick to the methods we know best, researchers often lack a systematic overview of the facets of trust to be studied, on the one hand, and the methods that have already been used to study trust, on the other hand. This kind of overview has been hard to come by. Möllering (2006: 127-154) was a rare example of an author who devoted a whole chapter to the question of how to study trust, including an overview of empirical approaches, a review of quantitative, qualitative and comparative approaches, and calling for interpretative approaches (see also Möllering et al., 2004). More recently, Saunders et al. (2015) have provided an overview chapter, which outlines the diversity of methods and highlights associated practical concerns for tourism scholars. Still, these are invariably selective in scope.

The first edition of this handbook (Lyon et al., 2012) provided a broad overview for the first time. This new edition reflects that such an overview needs to be updated regularly. The dynamic development of trust research calls for further and deeper engagement with methodological issues, particular methods, practical research experience, and current challenges and innovations.

Our optimism, expressed already in the previous edition, that the trust research community values methodological open-mindedness and pluralism has been confirmed by the positive take-up so far. It is very encouraging to hear from senior scholars as well as new researchers how this handbook does not gather dust on library shelves but is used extensively when trust research projects are designed. Perhaps more than in other

fields, our research topic itself prevents methodological hubris as it constantly reminds us how no single method can provide the perfect understanding of such a multi-faceted phenomenon. Additionally, while there are certainly many boundaries left between trust researchers from different disciplines (e.g. Perrone, 2013) it is encouraging to see that the chapters in the first edition have been cited, unsurprisingly, in various parts of management and organization studies as well as, more remarkably, in engineering, education, political science, sociology and other fields.

This handbook reflects on the journeys of trust researchers – from a broad range of geographical, cultural and scientific backgrounds and traditions – who let us in on their experience in particular methods. Their journeys are continuing and, hence, it was very important for this second edition to give the contributors the opportunity to update and revise their chapters according to recent results and insights associated with their respective methods. At the same time, we have added three new chapters that extend the range of methods considered, in particular, social network analysis (Zolin and Gibbons), scenario techniques (Addison) and abductive research (LeGall and Langley).

The origins of this book lie in conversations the editors have had with each other and with many trust researchers, often informally but increasingly also in specific sessions at conferences and workshops about methodological issues and options. The handbook offers a point of reference for such conversations which will continue at the Workshops of the First International Network on Trust (FINT) or the Standing Working Group on Organizational Trust of the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS) or in the pages of journals such as the *Journal of Trust Research* and edited volumes (e.g. Bachmann and Zaheer, 2013; Kramer and Pittinsky, 2012; Searle and Skinner, 2011a). Methodological developments are also increasingly common in exchanges with so-called practitioners who realize the importance of trust and want to understand it better. Current discussions, for example about contextualization or process perspectives in trust research, sooner or later elicit questions about the methodological implications of alternative perspectives: How do our methods evolve with our conceptualizations of trust?

Any current developments in trust research methods need to be understood against the background of many decades of research on trust and the theoretical and methodological foundations that were laid but that are there to be constantly challenged and renewed. In a rough historical sketch, we may point to seminal work in the 1960s and 1970s and read authors such as Deutsch (1973), Garfinkel (1967) and Rotter (1967). Note how they were interested in different facets of trust: Deutsch in trust decisions, Garfinkel in social interactions involving trust, and Rotter in personality and predisposition to trust. Their methods varied accordingly: lab experiments (Deutsch), field observations (Garfinkel), scale-based survey (Rotter). The chapters in this handbook generally go beyond merely describing a particular method as they also reflect upon the origin of the method and how it has been adopted and further developed in trust research.

The variety of methods for trust research may be partly explained by the variety of definitions of trust across the literature, which is often bemoaned and sometimes applauded by trust researchers. Good research practice, in theory, requires that method follows definition, though in practice it may often be the other way around. For example, if we adopt Mayer et al.'s (1995: 712) seminal definition of trust as a 'willingness [...] to be vulnerable', then our method should be suited to capturing such

willingness (see also Gillespie, this volume). David Schoorman, one of the authors of this definition, likes to make this point in his talks (e.g. at the 2014 Nebraska Symposium on Motivation): you may decide to use a different definition, but once you subscribe to *their* definition, you have to live up to it in your methods.

Trust research traditions have given rise to a broad range of definitional debates which are well addressed by Rousseau et al. (1998), Möllering (2006) and Dietz and Den Hartog (2006), to name just a few. Seppanen et al. (2007) in their review found that there are over 70 definitions of the concept of trust (see also Castaldo, 2007; Castaldo et al. 2010). Fink et al. (2010) content-analysed 126 definitions and divided them into two main ‘corridors’. For this handbook, we have decided to adopt a broad and well-known definition of trust as a point of reference for the contributors, specifically Rousseau et al. (1998: 395): ‘the psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another’.

However, debates on definitions in the English-language academic literature continue, paying little attention to the role of culture and language and the importance of understanding which word is used for trust, and its other interpretations (Saunders et al., 2010). In this book, we therefore recognize the diversity of trust concepts found in academic writing and readers will find variations between chapters. Hence, when working with the chapters, one needs to pay attention to how the methods are aligned with conceptualizations and definitions of trust. If we find a method appealing and would like to try it in our own projects, it may require a recalibration of our trust concept, too.

This handbook does not aim to be a social science methods text (e.g. Saunders et al. 2012 for business studies) and we accept that, in this second edition as well, not all areas of research methods on trust have been included. We have tried to identify those areas that raise practical concerns and require additional attention to methods when looking at trust. The chapters are aimed at both new and established researchers. They will appeal to those new to trust who wish to explore possible methods as well as those who have been researching trust from a particular tradition so far but are interested in considering alternatives.

Each chapter summarizes the state of the art of an element of trust research as perceived by the authors. We have encouraged contributors to inspire others and give a flavour of the diversity of trust research rather than provide a full review. As pluralists, we believe that no one method – whether quantitative or qualitative, used on its own or in conjunction with others – is stronger or weaker than another. Rather, we ask our readers to consider each in its own context. For this reason, every contributor has presented their own experience of using a particular method. In each chapter, researchers examine different methodological issues and particular methods and share their experiences of what works, what does not work, their challenges and innovations in researching trust. These reflections are central to the ethos of the book and distinguish it from other methods handbooks. We do not aim to be definitive but to be sharing, because as researchers we learn by experimentation.

The remainder of this introduction is organized basically according to the overall structure of this handbook. We first look at conceptualization as Part I of the book comprises chapters that identify conceptual issues and empirical approaches to researching them. We then look at qualitative research methods, in line with Part II of

the book, and subsequently quantitative methods (Part III). While we have adopted the common, yet still debated, qualitative–quantitative division, many chapters in the handbook demonstrate how qualitative and quantitative methods may be mixed in the same study. The last chapter is an essay by Katinka Bijlsma-Frankema and Denise Rousseau (Chapter 27) on how the community of trust researchers might boost the quality and impact of trust research in the future.

## **CONCEPTUALIZING TRUST**

Part I of the handbook features chapters with conceptual issues as their main starting point. The chapters by Roderick Kramer (Chapter 2) and Roy Lewicki and Chad Brinsfield (Chapter 4) consider how trust can be measured, raising points that are subsequently developed in chapters throughout the book, most notably in the chapter on quantitative measures by Nicole Gillespie (Chapter 20). The chapter by Bart Nooteboom (Chapter 5) introduces further measurement and conceptual challenges, particularly in cases when there is complex interaction between agents. He uses simulations to demonstrate the importance of trust and benevolence. Friederike Welter and Nadezha Alex (Chapter 6) look at how trust can be studied in different cultures. Boris Blumberg and his coauthors (Chapter 7) bring in the concept of social capital and Eric Uslaner (Chapter 8) represents, and defends, a particular approach to studying generalized trust. The new chapter in this part, by Véronique Le Gall and Ann Langley (Chapter 3) considers how trust researchers may adopt an abductive approach. This is illustrated in the context of studying inter-organizational alliances. However, since the chapters in Part II and III inevitably involve conceptual aspects, too, we offer in the following section a brief introduction of the key conceptual points of reference in studying trust as a background to this handbook as a whole: antecedents to trust, processes of building trust; contextual influences on trust development; decision-making processes of trust; consequences of trust; and issues around a lack of trust, distrust, mistrust and trust repair.

### **1.1 Antecedents of trust**

There has been much research on the factors that explain trust (e.g. Butler, 1991). Probably the most common and intensely studied antecedent is perceived trustworthiness. As Hardin (2001: 18) states: ‘A natural and common account of trust is that certain people are trustworthy and can therefore be trusted’. In their review article, Mayer et al. (1995: 720) famously proposed that ‘[t]rust for a trustee will be a function of the trustee’s perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity and of the trustor’s propensity to trust’ (p. 720). Meyer, Davis and Schoorman build on and condense numerous previous studies from Hovland et al. (1953) to Butler (1991; see Mayer et al., 1995: 718) that had identified various ‘indicators of trustworthiness’ (Zucker, 1986:60). They included another important and popular antecedent – propensity to trust (following Rotter, 1967) – but it is especially their ‘ABI’ dimensions (ability, benevolence, and integrity) that have been taken up by many trust researchers.

Much research has developed this approach, exploring how many antecedents to take into account and how to weigh them, for example the work of Graham Dietz and his colleagues who have extended and refined Mayer et al.’s model (see Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006; Dietz et al. 2010; Dietz, 2011). Like Mayer et al., they emphasize that perceived trustworthiness is not to be confounded with trust nor with trusting behaviour.

And to some extent they also open up the model to include factors that might affect the trustee's trustworthiness or the trustor's readiness to trust in a particular situation or context. Mayer et al. (1995: 724-727) include 'perceived risk' as a situational factor and also mention the role of context. Situational and contextual factors could be equally important or even decisive when we want to understand why people trust. To give just two well-known examples, Gulati (1995) shows that familiarity breeds trust and Zucker (1986) highlights the role of institutional safeguards for building trust.

Hence, the notion of trust antecedents has become somewhat fluid. The associated methodological challenge concerns the matching of models to the research subject's experience: If we impose our frameworks unthinkingly, our measurements may not reflect what really matters in the empirical reality of specific trustors and trustees. This is further complicated by the (more or less) emotional basis for trust that researchers have long recognized (Lewis and Weigert, 1985; McAllister, 1995). Some flexibility inherent in the method would thus been an advantage, as for example the card sort method presented by Mark Saunders (Chapter 12). Less flexible methods presuppose antecedents that may be invalid. Moreover, taking the relational quality of trust seriously (e.g. Frederiksen, 2014), how can we handle the fact that bases for trust are not 'given' but co-developed by trustor and trustee in a trust-building process? Hence we move from static antecedents of trust to the notion of dynamic trust development (Zand, 1972).

## ***1.2 Processes of Building Trust***

Several chapters in this handbook offer methods that can shed light on the trust-building process from a wide range of disciplines. Roy Lewicki and Chad Brinsfield (Chapter 4) provide an overview of the role of laboratory-based experimental strategies using simulation games to understand the underpinnings of trust judgements. Donald Ferrin, Michelle Bligh and Jeffrey Kohles (Chapter 21) also show the importance of seeing trust as shaped by the interdependence of two or more parties, as explained by Rousseau et al. (1998). They note that much research has shied away from this, with methodologies assuming independent actors rather than examining dyadic relations where trust in one partner affects trust held by the other party. This challenges simplistic notions of trustor and trustee. Field research on building trust has been an important element of the literature on trust and is explored in chapters by Friederike Welter and Nadezhda Alex (Chapter 6) and Malin Tillmar (Chapter 11) as well as others. Such approaches can focus on the personal relationships but may examine the institutional context as well, such as the political, legal and economic framework, and even the informal rules that make up culturally specific institutions.

The interest in trust as process is not new but the emphasis on research on perceived trustworthiness has resulted in it being somewhat neglected until recently (see Jagd, 2010; Möllering, 2013; Amoako and Lyon, 2014; Jagd and Fuglsang, forthcoming). The methodological implications for this kind of work go deeper than simply including a temporal dimension and the notion of development stages. The research needs to focus on the dynamics of the particular relationships under investigation (Frederiksen, 2014). An example of such work is Maguire et al.'s (2001) study of trust development between pharmaceutical companies and HIV/AIDS community organizations in Canada.

## ***1.3 The Context Shaping Trust-building***

Various chapters in this handbook demonstrate the importance of understanding culture and recognize the danger of ignoring the context in which trust operates. Trust has been shown to be a process that is deeply embedded in social relations (Granovetter, 1985; Lyon, 2005) and cultures (Saunders et al., 2010). Friederike Welter and Nadezhda Alex (Chapter 6) use a field study to examine how trust is part of entrepreneurial activity and how this is shaped by the cultural and regulatory context. Using a very different strategy – laboratory experiments – Davide Barrera, Vincent Buskens and Werner Raub (Chapter 22) examine how the concept of embeddedness can be brought into such controlled environments, whereas Susan Addison (Chapter 14) uses vignettes to study trust in workplace dyads. Research on how context shapes trust is not without its challenges. Roderick Kramer (Chapter 2) describes the small and subtle context specific behaviours, both verbal and non-verbal cues, in trust-building.

The chapter by Welter and Alex (Chapter 6) also points to the opportunity for comparative research that goes hand in hand with results from contextualization. While comparative work is very common in research on generalized trust at the societal level (e.g. Delhey and Newton, 2005; Uslaner, Chapter 8), comparative approaches remain underused, particularly at the meso and micro levels. Researchers may gain inspiration from a research project back in the 1990s which Möllering (2006: 146–50) refers to as the ‘Cambridge Contracting Study’: it shows different levels of trust between firms in Germany, Italy and the UK and also important country differences in the meaning and signalling of trust (e.g. Burchell and Wilkinson, 1997; Deakin et al., 1997; Lane and Bachmann, 1996).

#### ***1.4 Decision-making Processes in Trust***

Linked to research on the antecedents of trust and the trust-building processes is a set of literature that debates the decision-making processes of trust. Distinctions can be drawn from those who examine trust as a rational choice or calculation (e.g. Coleman, 1990 and others criticized by Williamson, 1993) in contrast to studies that take a wider view of trust that also includes the actions that are routinized, intuitive, habitual and often not explicitly stated (Kramer, 1996; Lyon, 2005; Möllering, 2006; Nooteboom, 1999). Attempting to reconcile the different views, McEvily (2011) proposes to allow for hybrid forms of trust. Still, how calculative trust is and what we mean by ‘calculativeness’ remains an interesting subject for debate, not least because of methodological implications: ‘trust measurement items need to be checked for their calculative content and inherent assumptions’ (Möllering, 2014: 12)

In this book, Richard Priem and Antoinette Weibel (Chapter 23) study the decision-making in trust, recognizing the importance of understanding when individuals face cognitive and emotional constraints. Similarly, Bart Nooteboom (Chapter 5) shows that, with incomplete contracts, calculative self-interest cannot explain everything and so there is a need to include other elements, such as benevolence.

#### ***1.5 Consequences of Trust***

There is a plethora of studies that aim to compare organizations, individuals and the impact of different degrees of types of trust on performance or social outcomes. Research on consequences of trust in business and management has examined the effect on financial performance (Zaheer and Harris, 2005), alliances or innovation (Nooteboom, 2002), while there has been other research looking at the effect of trust on

health outcomes and other aspects of human interaction (for example Brownlie et al., 2008).

These outcomes of trust can be examined at a range of levels, distinguishing between the micro, organizational/inter-organizational and societal levels (Bachmann and Zaheer, 2006; Nooteboom, 2002). In this book we present three conceptual chapters, each focusing on one of these levels. Friederike Welter and Nadezhda Alex (Chapter 6) look at the micro level of interpersonal entrepreneurial relations. Boris Blumberg, Jose Pieró and Robert Roe (Chapter 7) look at a meso level with networks of social capital, when researching inter-organizational relationships. There are also debates about the extent to which there is trust between organizations as entities themselves or between individuals within each organization (McEvily et al., 2003; Zaheer et al., 1998). At the societal level, Eric Uslaner (Chapter 8) examines the applicability of surveys that ask about the degree of generalized or moralistic trust that people have in others who are not known to them. Fulmer and Gelfand (2012) remind us that it is not only important to recognize trust at different levels but to also integrate the levels and study their interplay.

### ***1.6 Lack of Trust, Distrust, Mistrust and Repair***

The final cluster of research focuses on distinctions made between lack of trust, distrust and mistrust. Research on the consequences of trust has also included the downside of trust when individuals put themselves at risk (McEvily et al., 2003) or over-trust (Goel and Karri, 2006) which can lead to trust violations (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996; Dirks et al., 2009). Trust may be a ‘poisoned chalice’ (Skinner et al., 2014) and is closely linked to deception (Möllering, 2009). Boris Blumberg, Jose Pieró and Robert Roe (Chapter 7) show how trust can be eroded through lack of use or can suffer a radical loss if there is opportunism. Roy Lewicki and Chad Brinsfield (Chapter 4) discuss how trust is not always advantageous and can be misplaced. Furthermore, drawing on previous work (Lewicki et al., 1998), they argue that trust and distrust are independent constructs that can be held in the same relationship for different facets of that relationship. This leads to a further stream of research on relationship repair following violation (see Gillespie and Dietz, 2009; Kramer and Lewicki, 2010), but the lack of longitudinal research has limited the insights in this area to date.

These categorizations may not do justice to the wide range of research, much of which aims to draw together the different elements outlined above. Some studies try to capture trust very broadly while others are only interested in a particular element of trust, because their main interest is in another concept. Hence, Möllering (2006: 129) distinguishes between studies with trust as a central concern as opposed to those that examine it as a peripheral aspect. Moreover, some studies set out to study the concept from the start while others include trust as it emerges from a more inductive process or as an explanatory variable (see Möllering, 2006: 129). It may be late in the research process when researchers stumble across the concept and decide to examine it in more detail (for example Sitkin and Stickel, 1996). When trust was not part of the original research design or was considered merely a control variable, perhaps one cannot expect as much methodological care and rigour as if it were at the core of the study. However, as trust research matures, the expectations in terms of methodological rigour are rising regardless of whether ‘trust’ is a core or peripheral concern in the research design. For example, it would now be difficult to justify the use of one-item measures. Hence we



hope that the resources offered by this handbook will also be useful to those for whom trust is only peripheral, at least as they start out.

This section has examined the different approaches to conceptualizing the issues surrounding the concept of trust. The next section examines some of the methodological issues in more detail. In deciding on a structure, we have adopted the widely used division of qualitative and quantitative. Within this we acknowledge that trust research can and does mix both, either through drawing on different methods to examine different aspects sequentially, or by explicitly developing methods that use both qualitative and quantitative methods concurrently (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010). Examples of the latter include the card sort methods (Miriam Muethel, Chapter 13, and Mark Saunders, Chapter 12), scenarios combining vignettes and questionnaires (Susan Addison, Chapter 14) or repertory grid methods (Reinhard Bachmann, Chapter 15, and Melanie Ashleigh and Edgar Meyer, Chapter 16).

## **QUALITATIVE METHODS**

Qualitative methods, such as case studies (e.g. Yin, 2003), are advocated for research topics that are relatively new and unexplored (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). They are also particularly suited to studying trust as process (see Möllering 2013: 298). Moreover, as the participants of the 2014 sessions of the EGOS Standing Working Group on Organizational Trust expressed, qualitative methods are favoured when responding to calls for greater ‘contextualization’ (Bamberger, 2008; Tsui, 2006; specifically on trust see also Li, 2012; Mishra and Mishra, 2013; Amoako and Lyon, 2014). In this handbook, qualitative methods are found in both the inductive approaches of building theories, as in the chapters by Malin Tillmar on ethnography (Chapter 11) and by Reinhard Bachmann on the repertory grid technique (Chapter 15), and in deductive approaches that aim to test theories using qualitative data, such as in the chapter by Roderick M. Kramer (Chapter 2) and the new chapter by Susan Addison (Chapter 14). In this she uses scenarios to test the practical relevance of Meyer et al.’s (1995) theoretical framework. New to this second edition of the handbook, Véronique Le Gall and Ann Langley describe an abductive approach to studying trust in alliances (Chapter 3) that combines inductive and deductive approaches. In this section we explore some of the qualitative methods used in trust research, recognizing that the advantages and disadvantages of each are similar to those encountered when studying other topics, though the elusiveness of trust appears to add to the need for qualitative work as well as to the challenge of conducting it.

While being used to explore existing concepts in particular contexts, qualitative approaches allow for more open and less structured data collection methods that might enable new concepts to emerge that were not previously found in the literature. Ethnographic methods have had a long tradition of such research but have only received limited use in trust research. Malin Tillmar (Chapter 11) shows how these methods may achieve insights and access to sensitive data that may involve learning the local language in order to understand the facets of trust in different cultures. Through cross-case comparisons in two countries, she goes on to show how valuable insights can be gained of one’s own culture.

The use of qualitative methods also helps to avoid imposing definitions and frameworks on the research subjects, since it allows respondents to define what they

mean by trust, and as Reinhard Bachmann (Chapter 15) shows, there is a need to question the assumptions of universality frequently found in many frameworks of trust. Le Gall and Langley's (Chapter 3) abductive approach is able to detect when the data does not fit the categories found in the literature, which helps to stay true to the data and at the same time refine our theories. This is important in cross-cultural research that recognizes that, while some aspects of trust may be more or less universal (see Ferrin and Gillespie, 2010), people from different cultures and languages may develop and apply trust constructs in different ways. Melanie Ashleigh and Edgar Meyer (Chapter 16), Robert Münscher and Torsten Kühlmann (Chapter 19), and Calvin Burns and Stacey Conchie (Chapter 25) examine how trust constructs differ according to culture.

With the depth of information required in qualitative research, access to subjects for an extended period of time becomes an issue. While qualitative research on trust can involve a large number of shorter interviews, many methods set out in the book require that the participants provide over an hour of their time. In some organizations, people can be instructed to take part, but in others there is the need to build up trust and relationships with the participant. The chapter by Fergus Lyon (Chapter 9) explores this in detail, showing how interviewees in his research made comparisons between the relationship with the researcher and their own practices of building trust in business. Access is a greater challenge when dealing with sensitive issues. Mark Saunders (Chapter 12) shows how methods, such as the use of card sorts, can be used to break the ice and build rapport prior to conducting in-depth interviews. Malin Tillmar (Chapter 11) found that if she was seen in the communities in which she was working and demonstrated that she was making an effort to integrate (such as by learning the language), respondents would tell her more.

Similarly, access becomes a crucial issue when dealing with what some refer to as 'hard-to-reach groups', often involved in more informal activities or even illegality. Friederike Welter and Nadezhda Alex (Chapter 6) examine entrepreneurs' cross-border trade that had elements of sensitivity relating to getting through customs, and Christine Goodall's chapter (Chapter 10) on trust between new arrivals and settled communities explores how she gained access to people who would otherwise be very suspicious of people asking about this topic.

In some settings, it may be crucial but difficult to reach both sides of the trust dyad to be studied (see Addison, Chapter 14; Le Gall and Langley, Chapter 3; Ferrin et al., Chapter 21), either simply because the researcher has better access to one side than the other or because one side – who could help to put the researcher in touch with the other side – would not like the other side to know about their participation in the research, because of highly sensitive or confidential content. When both sides agree to be interviewed, this in itself can be a sign of the trust between them (see Möllering 2006: 184-185), but this could also mean a selection bias, if low-trust dyads are not available to be studied.

While interviewing has dominated much qualitative research, there is a wide range of other methods as well. Malin Tillmar (Chapter 11) shows that observation is an element of ethnography that can yield important results as it shows what people are doing, rather than what they are claiming to be doing, or wanting the researcher to think they are doing. Robert Münscher and Torsten Kühlmann (Chapter 19) use the critical incident technique to focus on key moments in cross-cultural management within firms, using observations to gather data that complement interview-based data. Gerard

Breeman (Chapter 18) uses the careful analysis of historical records and diaries, letters and other texts to understand trust in the tradition of hermeneutic methods.

There is also innovative work on researching non-linguistic approaches; pauses, silences and laughter, all of which are important indicators of how people respond to questions (Lyon, 2005). This is invariably lost in written responses to questions. There is also research on the role of emotions, shown through voiced utterances, emphasis, pitch and speaking speed. This presents challenges for coding and analysis although transcripts may capture it. Benjamin Waber and colleagues (Chapter 26) write on trust between medical staff when the subjects interact but do not have time to stop and talk to the researcher. They show how such interactions can be coded, quantified and explored. Then again, subjects may find the time to reflect on their trust relationships when the researcher is not present and, in such cases, diary methods might be a good choice (Searle, Chapter 24).

## **QUANTITATIVE METHODS**

We presented qualitative methods before quantitative methods in line with the notion that in-depth exploratory work is often used to prepare the ground for large-scale validation. Needless to say, it can also work the other way around in the sense that a survey helps to identify the mechanisms that are not well understood and that require deeper investigation. Quantitative work on trust started at least seventy years ago with measurements of generalized trust and predisposition to trust. A wide range of quantitative trust scales and measures, highlighted earlier, have been explored using surveys of ‘real-world situations’ or through laboratory experiments. This diversity has allowed trust research to grow, but the lack of convergence and replication is striking (see Dietz and Den Hartog, 2006; McEvily and Tortoriello, 2011; Whipple et al., 2013). Nicole Gillespie (Chapter 20) shows that a lack of common questions can limit the extent of replication in different contexts and cultures. She proposes a common set of psychometric measurements of trustworthiness and trusting behaviour that can be widely used for comparative purposes. The trade-off between replicability and context-sensitivity remains, though, and researchers still need to match their tools to the particular objectives and contexts of their investigations.

Questionnaire surveys have been used widely to explore all elements of trust research. Research on generalized trust has been common across a wide range of countries since the 1940s. Similar questions have been used, thereby allowing cultural comparisons to be made about trusting attitudes or moralistic trust (asking ‘can people be trusted?’). Eric Uslaner (Chapter 8) examines the challenges of such questions, including how they might be interpreted in different cultures and how responses could be shaped by the ordering of questions in surveys. However, he also notes a consistency of responses, over time and between questions, suggesting that the established ‘trust questions’ are rigorous.

While much research has focused on the elements of trusting behaviour, other surveys focus on trust related to interaction with a specific person or actor, with valuable information collected on patterns of how trust can be built up. Rosalind Searle (Chapter 24) shows that a diary method can be used to collect data using structured questions to allow comparisons between people and changes over time. However, as for other research on trust, she is sensitive to the challenges of using the word ‘trust’ in

surveys as it can change behaviour. The types and nature of network relationships can be examined by Social Network Analysis (see Chapter 17 by Roxanne Zolin and Deborah Gibbons). They show how network statistics can show where people sit within a network, the intensity of the relationship and the structure of the network (centralised, decentralised or clumpy).

Other approaches look at measuring the frequency of trusting interactions and their nature. The methods of card sorting, ranking and repertory grid analysis (Chapters 12, 13, 15 and 16) show that there can also be a mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods and, consequently, an element of quantification of results. Using multiple methods can provide quantitative data such as recording the responses of individuals after they have read a vignette or a particular case study provided by the researcher (see Chapter 22 by Davide Barrera, Vincent Buskens and Werner Raub).

Laboratory experiments have been particularly important in trust research as a way to explore basic cognitive processes in a controlled setting. Roderick Kramer shows the power of such research in examining trust, particularly when it can be combined with other methods outside of the laboratory. Roy Lewicki and Chad Brinsfield (Chapter 4) review some of the interactive experiments or trust games that look at individual behaviour. Donald Ferrin and colleagues (Chapter 21) follow up on this work by looking at dyads, that is both sides of the relationship, recognizing that each side in a trust relationship is not working independently, whether they are co-workers, leaders/followers or partners in a joint venture.

Innovative approaches to laboratory experiments are also being developed in trust research. Calvin Burns and Stacey Conchie (Chapter 25) examine the more tacit side of trusting relationships that might not be evident from surveys or verbal responses. They measure the strength of associations related to trust concepts by calculating the time taken to respond to stimuli. Similarly, Roy Lewicki and Chad Brinsfield (Chapter 4) refer to the intuitive trust based on facial characteristics. There are also insights from neuro-economics, which has examined the roles of hormones such as oxytocin on trust (e.g. Kosfeld et al., 2005; Zak et al., 2004).

## **METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES**

The methodological challenges of researching trust are illuminated throughout each chapter in this book, as authors reflect on their own work. We consider the five themes we already identified in the first edition of this handbook still to be the most pressing challenges: the dynamic process of trust; researching tacit elements of trust; conceptualizing and describing trust in different cultures; the role of researchers in shaping the trust situation they are researching; and ethics in researching trust. These challenges also point the way towards future research opportunities in the field.

As outlined earlier, trust is a dynamic process as it is built up, used, maintained, broken and repaired over time. Process views of trust come with methodological implications (Möllering, 2013). For example, the temporal element is rarely captured in trust research but longitudinal data collection methods can capture it to some extent and are increasingly called for (Searle and Skinner, 2011b: 341). Nicole Gillespie (Chapter 20) shows how research on measures of trustworthiness can be related dynamically to trust behaviour, Rosalind Searle (Chapter 24) shows how diaries can be used to record

processes over time (although as research progresses the dropout rate tends to increase) and Robert Münscher and Torsten Kühlmann (Chapter 19) show how high-quality interviewing skills used to examine critical incidents can capture the dynamism of changing trust in ongoing relationships. Stage models of trust development such as the one by Lewicki and Bunker (1996; see also Lewicki et al. 2006) are useful to sensitize our research to the dynamics of trust, though the stages should not be reified. Trust-building as a process is also increasingly studied at the inter-organizational level (e.g. Kroeger, 2012; Schilke and Cook, 2013).

A challenge for process approaches as well as more conventional ones remains that the less visible or tacit forms of trust are particularly hard to identify and collect data on as they may not be expressed explicitly by those involved. Research in this volume shows how trust can be captured by recording the non-verbal responses, with innovative approaches examining people's response to particular words (see Calvin Burns and Stacey Conchie, Chapter 25). These kinds of methods attempt to avoid the subject's tendency to rationalize their trust when interacting with researchers.

The cultural dimension of trust is particularly important and increasingly recognized as central to trust research (Saunders et al., 2010). With cross-cultural research come methodological challenges of language translation and questions of whether the scales of trust commonly used can be transferred across cultures. This issue is discussed in detail by Katinka Bijlsma-Frankema and Denise Rousseau in their examination of the 'generality' of trust research results (Chapter 27). Friederike Welter and Nadezhda Alex (Chapter 6) show this is particularly difficult in comparative work between countries, and Christine Goodall (Chapter 10) points out the challenges of working on this topic with new arrivals in a UK community. Reinhard Bachmann (Chapter 15) cautions against assuming universality on any concept and advocates approaches which can capture the differences. Miriam Muethel (Chapter 13) uses a board game to allow researchers to study how people from different cultures use language related to trust. Malin Tillmar (Chapter 11) explores how ethnographic methods and a researcher's knowledge of the different languages can help. Replication of studies in different cultures along with careful analysis will allow for more insights into those conceptual elements that are more universal, although as both Nicole Gillespie (Chapter 20) and Roy Lewicki and Chad Brinsfield (Chapter 4) show, there has been little consistency in the questions being asked by different surveys. Susan Addison (Chapter 14) highlights the difficulty of developing scenarios for multiple organisations and emphasises that this issue needs to be recognised across organisational as well as national cultures.

The fourth methodological challenge identified here is the role of the researcher. Researching trust raises issues of reflexivity, including trust between researcher and the researched. Both Fergus Lyon (Chapter 9) and Malin Tillmar (Chapter 11) show that how the researcher is perceived shapes the information provided. These chapters and others show the significance of building up relationships of trust with interviewees and how important it is to pay careful attention to issues that might create mistrust (such as the use of interview recording in some situations). Research can also change relationships by talking about trust. Rosalind Searle (Chapter 24) refers to psychological reactance, Mark Saunders (Chapter 12) highlights that discussing trust can lead to stress or behaviour change, and Robert Münscher and Torsten Kühlmann (Chapter 19) are sensitive to the distress that discussing critical incidents can have on respondents.

This leads to the final methodological challenge related to the ethics of research on trust. As mentioned earlier, trust research covers topics that are sensitive in nature, either within an organization or community, or between groups. Where these activities have an element of illegality or secrecy this becomes particularly challenging. Christine Goodall (Chapter 10) shows that there is a tendency for respondents to report trust in neighbours or authority as they wish to appear trusting; Calvin Burns and Stacey Conchie (Chapter 25) refer to the risk of people giving socially desirable answers in interviews. Trust researchers have been particularly aware of social desirability effects (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964) and try to study the topic indirectly or, at least, avoid using the word 'trust' until the subjects bring it up themselves. It is still a challenge to find the most appropriate way of circumventing biases without missing the target. A further ethical dilemma arises when looking at different sides of a trust relationship when there are likely to be different views of the same situation and the potential for research to affect the relationship negatively.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The more recent growth in trust research is evidenced by the ongoing proliferation in publications on the subject. In this book we reflect on the different strategies for researching trust, the range of innovative methods that have been developed by trust researchers, and the methodological challenges that are particular to trust. As Roy Lewicki and Chad Brinsfield suggest (Chapter 4), trust research appears to be undergoing a process of divergence not convergence of paradigms. Parallel debates are taking place in the literature of different disciplines, whether they are management and organization studies, sociology, geography, anthropology, psychology, institutional economics, political science or emerging schools such as neuro-economics. There is a risk that each school of thought will develop a self-referential discourse and language, although we note that many trust researchers are trying to work across these boundaries. We advocate a 'horses-for-courses' approach which means that methodological fit gets the highest priority. It is, for example, of no use to adopt a widely-recognized and validated instrument that simply does not fit the object of study. However, trust researchers need to be able to connect insights that have been gained through various methods, in different contexts and with particular aims. We can learn from the Indian fable of the elephant and the blind men that we may work on different parts of the elephant of 'trust' as long as we still have the whole animal in mind (see Möllering, 2006: 105).

The overarching endeavour of trust research should go beyond disciplinary boundaries and be carried out by interdisciplinary researchers or in interdisciplinary teams. The methodological challenge of bringing different schools and different disciplinary methods together is touched on in a number of chapters. Friederike Welter and Nadezhda Alex (Chapter 6) show how the interaction in international interdisciplinary groups of scholars also requires an element of trust (see also Newell and Swan, 2000). Moreover, such combinations of disciplines and professions provide their own challenges in terms of comparing findings or interpreting research that test the same hypotheses using very different methods.

The future directions of trust research are therefore diverse, but a number of trends can be identified. There is an emerging focus on culture and a move beyond assuming universality of trust constructs developed in North America and Western

Europe. The chapters in this volume illuminate methods and associated issues when researching how trust operates in different contexts and cultures. Such methods need to recognize cultural differences between countries, within countries, between professions and between sectors. Specific methods such as card sorts (Chapter 13 by Miriam Müthel) and ethnography (Chapter 11 by Malin Tillmar) offer alternative ways to explore the different underlying cultural interpretations.

Trust appears to be of growing interest following the breakdown of many previously relied on institutions, whether they were related to international financial systems or community-level engagement and relationships (e.g. Kramer and Pittinsky, 2012). These challenges to the status quo also throw up new forms of trust-building that are worthy of academic investigation. Examples include new forms of relationships arising from e-commerce and virtual networking, or new forms of organizing that rely on cooperation and collaboration. These may be at the bilateral level, at the community level or at the macro level of societal trust in generalized others and formal institutions. There are demands from different disciplines to explain changes in trust and, hence, new opportunities arise to challenge disciplinary conventions, always requiring a careful (re)consideration of method.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, this volume is an exercise of a community of researchers sharing their ideas and experiences of researching trust. It is not a definitive textbook, although it identifies a diversity of research methods that new researchers can explore in more detail elsewhere. It is part of the process of reflecting on methodology and demonstrating a stage in the maturity of trust research (see Ferrin, 2013). This second edition of the handbook strives to build momentum and facilitate the further advancement of trust research as it cuts across boundaries, whether they are disciplinary, professional, sectoral or geographical.

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